"They could afford so much travelling?" the Duke asked.

"Papa had been left some money by his godfather, besides an allowance his father made him, and wherever they stayed he sent an article under a different name to the Royal Geographical Society."

"So that is why you lived abroad," the Duke remarked.

"I was born after they had been married for four years," Luella said, "and I went with them everywhere. But Papa had learned that the King of Sweden was furious, and Mama's father, who was a cousin of the King, ordered that her name was never to be mentioned again." She sighed before she added: "We always . . supposed that Queen Victoria was no less . . annoyed."

"I think it was very sensible of your father to do what he did," the Duke said.

"They were so very . . very happy," Luella whispered. "At the . . same time, Papa was not a . . D.Duke. And as a Duke . . you have a responsibility to look after . . your relatives . . and also your . . estates . . and your position is . . very . . very important . . not only to you . . but to so many other p.people."

"And what about you?" the Duke asked.

"I . . love you . . you know I love you," Luella said unhappily, "but I love you . . too much to do . . anything that would . . spoil your l.life." The last words were incoherent because the tears were running down her face.

The Duke took a handkerchief from a pocket and gently wiped them away. At the same time he was

holding her very close. Then he said: "This has been too much for you, my precious one. I am going to take you back inside the house, and I want you to go to bed. We will talk again about everything in the morning."

"It would be . . better if you . . let me go away . . n.now," Luella murmured.

"Do you think I would allow you to go anywhere alone?" the Duke asked. "If you love me, I love you, and I must protect you, take care of you, and never allow you to go into danger." He spoke so firmly that Luella knew there would be no point in arguing with him.

He got up from the wooden seat, took her hands in his and raised her to her feet. Putting one arm round her, he picked up her case in his other hand. They walked together over the grass and went into the house by the garden door. They did not speak.

The Duke led her up the side-staircase as if he knew instinctively that was the way she had left. When they reached her bedroom door he opened it to see that the oil-lamp was still burning beside her bed. He looked at her for a long moment before he said: "I want you to promise me, my darling, on everything you hold sacred that you will not run away during the night, but will be here in the morning."

There was a touch of laughter in his voice as he went on: "If you do not promise me, then of course I shall have to stay with you all night, and I am sure Mrs Alcombe will be deeply shocked!"

Because his eyes were twinkling, Luella could not help giving a little chuckle. "I give you . . my word,"